



How do you create buy-in in strategy implementation?

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How do you create buy-in in strategy implementation?

Problem statement

Major source of uncertainty and risk for strategy work, is getting participation and ‘buy-in’ in the organization. Our empirical studies and literature identified buy-in as a central risk factor in strategy implementation. To understand how executives deal with this challenge, we utilized a sense-making model detailing how identities of participation can be achieved through negotiation of meaning or identification. Based on 36 interviews with senior managers and the theoretical foundations of participation and situated learning



Getting employees on board

“If the employees are not on board, and do not wish to make the change happen, it will not happen”

People are irrational

“People are irrational, but a strategies often build on logic, rational thinking - This is not a match.”

Board of directors

“There has to be buy-in for all of the board for a strategy to succeed (Director of board)”

Getting people to take part and be engaged

According to Wenger (1998), participation and engagement is not an absolute, but rather employees will be on a trajectory towards participation or non-participation that can be negotiated through economies of meaning or realized through identification. In the interview data we identified multiple instances of fostering participation or non-participation. he sense making model conceptualizes how buy-in can be fostered through engagement, imagination and alignment, for instance by ‘having ones ideas adopted’ (engagement) or a vicarious experience (utilizing the imagination). According to Wenger (1998), participation and engagement is not an absolute, but rather employees will be on a trajectory towards participation or non-participation that can be negotiated through economies of meaning or realized through identification.

Engagement

Imagination

Alignment

Having one’s ideas adopted

Listening to employees suggestions

- “We provide them freedom to figure out how to ‘translate’ the strategy into their reality” - Senior manager
- “The best thing to do [in order to implement a strategy successfully] is if the users – employees, managers and customers – are part of the development of the strategy. If that is not possible, then they should at least be part of challenging and qualifying it” - Partner & Senior Consultant

Vicarious experience

Imagining ‘what would it mean for my work’

- Danske bank game
- Cascade design at Coloplast

Directed experience

Trying it out

- “for me that’s important to kind of get people to experience reasons for things, - which is much stronger than looking into Excel and trying to understand them.” – Strategy manager

Allegiance to a social movement

A vision that resonate

- “Alignment was fostered through a common vision and cross organization projects where ‘everybody feels it’s a win” - Vice president

You have to design a solution that is good enough for people to use it by themselves without you holding a gun to their head”

Getting people to take part and be engaged

A duality exist between representations of a strategy and how the meaning of these are negotiated. Artifacts and people are not separate and people interpret differently. No artifact or broker stands alone. Artifacts are always, interpreted negotiated by a broker and the artifact always shapes the negotiation of meaning. This holds true for strategy implementation. We identified examples of brokers, such as pivotal stakeholders ‘change enablers’, central in negotiating the meaning of a strategy with other employees. Crucial representations of a strategy are thought to ‘stand alone’, but in reality they are interpreted and negotiated. In some companies this process was consciously directed, for instance: Multiple companies used ‘cascade design’ of what a strategy would mean for employees in a co-creation setting.

People

Artefacts

People

Artefacts

“People facilitate boundary objects and boundary objects facilitate people”

People (Broker)

Artefacts (Boundary object)

Adapted from Wenger, E. (1998): Communities of practice

Getting people to take part and be engaged

- Check your strategic initiative for ways of fostering participation
- Listen to people’s ideas and involve them in the process
- Align organisational and personal goals
- Actively take into account the interplay between people and artifacts
 - Let the people side facilitate the understanding of the artifacts and vice versa
 - Identify brokers throughout the organisation
- Create a shared understanding by connecting visual cues, and artefacts with people through events, workshops, meetings etc.